THE MINISTRY OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The question do not arise.

Functioning of PDS

1687. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the manner in which PDS is functioning in the country;

(b) whether Government have streamlined the PDS to serve the drought affected population in the drought-hit States; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) launched in June, 1997 with its focus on the poor is functioning well in the country.

(b) and (c) The Government has constituted a Task force consisting of 40 officers from FCI and 10 officers from CWC for checking irregularities brought to the notice of the Government and also for general inspection/monitoring of the implementation of TPDS and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). Deficiencies as pointed out by the Task Force teams are brought to notice of respective State Governments for taking remedial action.

Task Force for monitoring PDS

1688. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:
SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have set up a Task Force to keep a vigil on complaints of starvation deaths, diversion or recycling of foodgrains meant for the PDS;

(b) if so, when such a Task force was set up;

(c) whether it has become functional;

(d) if so, the number of irregularities found so far;

(e) whether his Ministry is thinking of expanding the Antyodaya Scheme to more BPL families; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) to (d) A list of suitable Officers has been drawn up in the Department of Food and Public Distribution so that, when situations arise necessitating investigation into the adequacy (or otherwise) of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in any area, alleged "starvation" and other matters concerning the supply and distribution of foodgrains, a team of such Officers can quickly be deputed to these areas to assess the situation. Each Team of Officers is called a Task Force.

The Task Force was set up in August, 2002. First Task Force Team visited Orissa in early September, 2002.

The deficiencies observed in the functioning of PDS, concerning issues like identification of beneficiaries, issuance of ration cards, opening of Fair Price Shops, giving adequate information to the consumers, etc., are brought to the notice of respective State Governments for taking remedial action.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. This is in line with the Prime Minister's initiative relating to 'Alleviation of hunger amongst the most vulnerable sections of the society such as old people, widows and disabled persons without family or societal support', announced on the Independence Day, 2002.

BPL Families

1689. SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether all the States have since identified the families living Below Poverty Line:

(b) if so, the number thereof, State-wise;

(c) if not, by when the States would complete this exercise; and

(d) the manner in which the BPL families would get the benefits that is due to them, where the identification of the BPL families has not yet been done?